

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, first, I appreciate the comments made by the Senator from South Dakota, emphasizing what can't be done on short terms. I think we have been talking about that all morning.

Last week, 100 mayors from across the Nation wrote to the Senate leaders urging for a long-term transportation bill. They said, "If the status quo continues, deficient transportation infrastructure will cost American businesses \$430 billion by 2020."

Then there are the 31 construction and transportation groups that sent a harsh reminder to Congress that "past extensions have not led to a lasting solution to the Highway Trust Fund's repeated revenue shortfalls."

I remember because I have been around here for a while, and I have been through six of these transportation reauthorization bills. In the interim, we always end up with short-term extensions. People don't realize we can't do major projects with short-term extensions.

Now, I hear the argument sometimes that in this one we have a 6-year bill, but we are paying for only 3 years. That is fine. Make the argument. But there is something unique in the transportation system, which is that in the event we get through halfway—even though it is a 6-year bill—and the funds are not available to the existing shortages of what we have added, then all projects stop. Not a penny can be spent. This isn't true anywhere else in our government, and I think people have to realize that if we are going to do it.

When the Senator from Minnesota was talking and showing these very graphic pictures of the bridge that collapsed killing 13 people, that really sends something home. We can't wait until that happens before we do the responsible thing.

I have to remind my conservative friends it is our constitutional duty. When we were sworn into office, we swore to uphold the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution in article I, section 8 tells us what we are supposed to be doing: We are supposed to be defending America, including our bridges and roads. That is what we are supposed to be doing.

There is a way. I hope the people who—unless they just don't want to take care of these big, serious problems and want to continue with the short-term extensions, there is a way we can do this. We will be asking for unanimous consent to go ahead and make a vote on what we are voting on right now and considering. If all time has to expire, it would be 5 a.m. tomorrow on the Inhofe substitute for the bill. That means we then wouldn't get around to having this bill passed until Thursday, and Thursday would be after the House is gone. So it is over. That is it. This would be a very easy thing to do.

Again, I am going to remind people that while we don't have the chance for amendments after this vote takes

place, we can still have the manager's amendment, where I personally will consider every one of the amendments that comes forth. I am hoping that will happen.

That is what we are faced with right now.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

# RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:35 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

## HIRE MORE HEROES ACT OF 2015— Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, this Friday, July 31, the authorization for the highway trust fund will expire and the fund itself will be nearly out of money. That means that unless Congress acts, projects in New Hampshire and across the country will grind to an abrupt halt. In the face of this, the House has passed yet another short-term, stopgap bill. The Senate is now debating and amending a long-term highway bill.

My clear preference is for a long-term bill. I think it would be a terrible mistake to pass yet another short-term extension without at the same time taking action on a long-term bill like the Senate is currently doing. Only passing another short-term extension—which would be the 34th since 2008—without taking steps toward a multiyear bill would be kicking the can down the road, and in this case the road is overwhelmed by traffic, badly in need of modernization, and filled with patches and potholes. If you have driven around on the roads in the District of Columbia, sometimes you wonder where you are because they are so bad, so filled with potholes. For a country that seeks to remain competitive in the 21st century, as we do in America, this is totally dysfunctional and destructive.

There are few more basic and necessary functions of government than providing for modernized highways, bridges, and other transportation infrastructure. Yet in Congress we have been grossly neglecting this responsibility. China spends about 9 percent of gross domestic product on infrastructure. Brazil spends about 8 percent. Even in Europe they are spending about 4 percent. But infrastructure spending in the United States has fallen to just 2 percent of GDP.

Our highways and bridges face an \$800 billion backlog of investment needs, including nearly half a trillion dollars in critical repair work. Americans spend a staggering 5.5 billion hours stuck in traffic each year. Yet in early May we saw a budget pass out of this Congress

supported by the majority party that slashed Federal funding for transportation by 40 percent over the next decade.

I am especially concerned about disrepair and decay among our Nation's bridges. That is why I filed an amendment which is a bill I have introduced in previous Congresses called the SAFE Bridges Act. The Federal Highway Administration has identified more than 145,000—145,000—structurally deficient or functionally obsolete bridges. That is more than 20 percent of all the bridges in the United States. In New Hampshire it is actually a higher percentage.

In May, I went with the mayor and city manager of Concord—New Hampshire's State capital—to inspect the rusted-out and now-closed Sewalls Falls Bridge, which is one of the three critical bridges in Concord across the Merrimack River. I worked very hard with the city—our office did—to get necessary approvals from the U.S. Department of Transportation to replace this bridge. In fact, it is a replacement project that started back in 1994. The city of Concord lined up all the permits and approvals—and then nothing. Because of uncertainty about Federal funding for the project, it was stopped dead in its tracks.

My amendment, the SAFE Bridges Act, would authorize an additional \$2 billion annually for the next 3 years to enable States to repair and replace their structurally deficient or functionally obsolete bridges. States would get funding based on their share of deficient bridges nationwide, and the additional funding is fully paid for by closing a corporate tax loophole.

As the Senate continues to debate the Transportation bill, I hope we do get an opportunity to vote on relevant amendments like my SAFE Bridges Act.

The neglect of our transportation infrastructure is creating congestion and gridlock on our roads. It is hurting our economy and our global competitiveness. It is also killing jobs—especially in the construction trades, where employment has yet to recover from the great recession.

According to a Duke University study, providing Federal funding to meet the U.S. Department of Transportation's infrastructure requests would create nearly 2.5 million new jobs. So our investment in this industry, which is one of the slowest recovering from the recession, would create millions of new jobs.

Several months ago, I joined in a bipartisan group of eight Senators who had previously served as Governors—Senators KING, ROUNDS, KAINE, HOEVEN, WARNER, CARPER, MANCHIN, and myself. We sent a letter to our Senate colleagues urging that we commit to fully funding national infrastructure priorities and that we put a stop to the dysfunctional short-term fixes that have become routine in recent years.